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PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

ON

NOVEMBER 30, 1777.

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BY

JOHN MAINWARING, B.D.

FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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ST. K. M. O. N.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

NOVEMBER 1911

JOHN MANNING

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS

CAMBRIDGE

TO

JOSEPH CRADOCK, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

A DESIRE to encourage merit, whether real, or supposed, is an excellent quality in itself, and of great importance to the welfare of society. A desire to merit encouragement, though often confounded with the foolish solicitude for fame, is the mark of an ingenuous mind, and the motive to every laudable endeavour. It supposes indeed, what I hope

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will

will be admitted without the form of a proof, — that the best reward of industry is, the approbation of the wise and good. To whom then could I more fitly address the following Discourse, than to a Person of distinguished rank in the polite and literary circle, who, before I had the happiness of knowing him, had honoured me with marks of his esteem; and, at the risque of his own reputation, recommended my writings to the notice of the world. The world however, had not been troubled with this Discourse, were I not desirous, that my acknowledgment should be as public as the obligation. I always knew, that compositions of this kind were, for several reasons, the most difficult of any; and much less useful than they might be, from the fashionable prejudice conceived against them. I never imagined, that I could contribute to remove a prejudice, which so many causes conspire to fortify; or that the good old truths,

truths, if they really needed, could receive from me, a better recommendation than they have already. It is a comfort however to reflect, that I have not been wanting in my endeavours to revive and cherish those obsolete sentiments, on the growth and vigour of which must depend not only the happiness of individuals, but the strength and safety of states and communities. If, after all, my labour might have been spared, I have lost but little, because I have written but little; and each portion of that pittance has been submitted to the *Public* with a view to discharge some duty of friendship, or some debt of gratitude.

If I have ventured to deviate somewhat from the usual form and cast of Discourses for the Pulpit, you know, Sir, they must be judged of from their suitability to the purposes for which they are designed; must be suited, in some degree, to the temper of the times; and, in the *Place* for which mine were intended,

ed, have always been considered as a sort of Exercises: Where coarseness, or negligence would be inexcusable, the faults chiefly to be feared are, affectation and refinement. But I flatter myself, that a strong sense of the danger has formed my security.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged and affectionate Servant,

May 6, 1778.

J. MAINWARING.

S E R M O N.

2 T I M. I. part of verse 8.

BE NOT THOU THEREFORE ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY OF
OUR LORD.

THIS admonition to Timothy may seem superfluous, as it appears from St. Paul's own declaration, that he had the highest confidence in the sincerity and firmness of his young disciple. But human virtue, in the young or old, is never wholly exempt from danger: and the times were now so very perilous to all, who professed Christianity; that, what with the terrible persecutions they endured, and the infamous reproaches, which were added to them, several of St. Paul's zealous associates withdrew themselves just at the moment when their assistance was most wanted; and all his converts from Asia Minor deserted to a man.

As the mischiefs of deserting engagements of this sort are so extensive and so fatal in every view, it may be useful to inquire into the causes of such conduct. I think they are chiefly comprized under the three following heads,

SORDID INTEREST,

UNMANLY FEAR,

FALSE SHAME,

and in this order I intend to consider them.

Self-love is so apt to exceed its bounds, that it is almost become a term of reproach; though, when orderly and regular, it is quite conformable to the views of wisdom. Our nature indeed would be a reproach to the Author of it, if, as most of the modern writers on morality have affirmed, every action and every motive must be ultimately referred to this single principle. The excessive refinements in the reasonings of these writers, have occasioned not only much fruitless altercation, but also very mischievous errors. Who could ever have imagined, that the considerations of the pure rewards, which virtue promises, would, by a little scholastic chymistry, be resolved into mercenary motives; — that benevolence, friendship, patriotism, would all be degraded from their high rank, and levelled with that *sordid interest*, which seeks its own gratification at the expense of order, justice, and the public welfare? For who can be ignorant, that man was intended for society, is endued with affections particularly suited to that state,

state, and the several obligations resulting from it? — obligations, which are plainly pointed to by the power we have of contributing in so many ways to the happiness of others; and by the pleasure arising from the use of that power, even when we suffer by exerting it. The constitution of our nature is in this instance, as in others, correspondent to the general system. For although the end of creation was the communication of happiness, and though every act of it must be referred to the goodness of God, yet things are so ordered, that the welfare of one part arises from the sufferings of another. The slaughter of so many animals for the sustenance of other animals, and of man himself, mysterious as it is, may teach us to expect, what is actually experienced — that *we* too may be required, on certain occasions, to promote the interest of other beings by the sacrifice of our own; by the voluntary surrender of ease, possessions, pleasures, or even life itself, should the cause of truth, or the public happiness exact from us so solemn a *testimony* of our regard for them. Yet, if He, who freely gave us all we have, should demand it back for the accomplishment of his wise designs; and, on such an occasion, one man should resolve to forego his interest from a regard to his duty, while another deserted his duty for the sake of his interest, the patrons of the selfish system would persist in assuring us, that both were influenced in reality by the same motive, and actuated, at bottom, by the same principle. If this were a true account, virtue would be valued only for its utility, the whole

of our obedience to the supreme Being must be rested on interest, or fear, or compulsion; and religion must be chiefly intended for men of abject minds. But as every one, who is conscious of any generous affections carries within himself a full confutation of such idle sophistry; so the very complacency with which the exercise of those affections is attended, would, to such persons, be a sufficient recompense were there no other. Both reason and scripture concur in the assurance, that God will amply compensate sufferings, which flow from his own appointment, and are endured in compliance with his will; we hope and believe, that the final benefit of the sufferers themselves is one of the principal ends intended by them; yet the purity of our affection for the greatest and best of Beings, is no way impaired by the hope or belief of that beneficent intention.

While one class of writers has unjustly reproached our religion for the nature of its motives, another has as rashly condemned it for the rigour of its duties. But allowing these to be practicable, are they not, at least, extremely difficult in the practice? Without doubt, *some of them* are. If they were *not*, the merit of performing them, and the reward annexed to the performance, would both be lessened. So that, if God, in virtue of his supreme dominion, had not a right to impose such services, men of exalted sentiments would rather chuse, than decline them. But where, it will be asked, shall we find such sentiments, except in the pages of poetry and romance?

I answer, in the records of authentic history, and in the intercourse of real life. Otherwise the fictions of Poetry and Romance could afford us neither pleasure nor instruction: history would not be worth our reading, nor life worth our enjoying. True indeed it is, and much to be lamented, "that a selfish spirit, active, and permanent in its own nature, has been strengthened and promoted by accidental causes: that this fault is by no means confined to men of bad morals: and, while it shelters itself under the semblance of virtue, is more hurtful to individuals, and to nations, than even those disorderly passions, which so often involve them in criminal pursuits."

As these observations may require to be a little unfolded, I shall take some compass to consider each in the order here expressed.

With respect to the first, a mercenary spirit, destructive of every exalted sentiment, so far as it reaches, has arisen from the gradual influx of wealth in this commercial country. Its growth, however, would have been less rapid, had it not been nursed and fostered by the false Ethics of a neighbouring nation: had not our own writers meanly condescended to borrow from them their very modes of thinking, as well as their graces and ornaments of style; and, by adopting notions, which degrade our nature, undermined the foundations of virtue and honesty. Both indeed were alike misled by the thirst of novelty, the passion for refinement, and an immoderate fondness
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for deep disquisition. Metaphysics is an abyss, in which the short line of our reason is lost by attempting to fathom it. It is a labyrinth, where we wander without end, the moment we relinquish the plain road of fact and experience. Though the benevolent affections may be suspended by passion, or suppressed by vice, yet we know their reality, and their force we feel. So clearly do we feel it, that their mere native, unassisted energy is sometimes superior to the strongest efforts of an improved, and habitual self-love. But when so much industry has been employed to strengthen the claims of this encroaching power, and to divest our nature of its noblest qualities; what wonder if we have cause to lament it in the actions of individuals, or in the effects of a crooked and contracted policy?

To exemplify the second reflexion, "that the selfish spirit is not confined to men of bad morals," — we have a remarkable instance in the young man, who came to consult our Saviour concerning his duty, and the methods of obtaining eternal happiness. He had a serious sense of religion, and his conduct was conformable to his sentiments. So far all was well. But something farther was yet wanting. His own enquiry shews a consciousness of some deficiency; and the answer of our Lord explains the nature of it. "If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." But when the young man, who had great possessions, heard that saying,

saying, he went away sorrowful, — distressed by the difficulty of deciding; ardently wishing for the rewards of *perfection*, but not willing to pay the price of them! In this occurrence we see the sad triumphs of a sordid temper over a sound understanding. The young man *knew*, that an immortal soul was of more value, than perishable possessions; and that the endless felicity, which his divine Instructor offered him, far outweighed any enjoyments, which his treasures could afford him. He *knew*, that the punctual observance of instituted rules, though a laudable instance, was no complete standard, of faith or obedience. The foundation of every real excellence is, a sense of duty, independent of all institutions; — a desire to please our Maker from the sole persuasion of his infinite perfections. Whoever is sincere in the desire to please him, will not measure out his obedience by the strict line of stated injunctions, or rest contented with any determined degrees of goodness, because let a man's progress in virtue be what it will, it is always far short of his obligations. All this the young man *knew*. But the errors of the *heart* are inexplicable!

We may further observe, that though the nature of virtue is always the same, yet not only the occasions of exerting it are very different, but the idea too, which we form to ourselves concerning its extent, is apt to vary with the habits of thinking peculiar to our own times, and to the persons, with whom we are connected. Ages of ignorance and barbarism, though unfriendly to the milder virtues, are not strangers to exalted
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sentiments. In ages of refinement, certain maxims of prudence, together with those decencies and proprieties of behaviour, which are justly admired and generally practised in the upper ranks of life, too often constitute the whole worth of character. But the natural feelings of man must be strangely perverted, before he can persuade himself, that politeness can compensate for the want of principle; or that a mere regard to justice can supply the place of humanity and benevolence.

In explaining the last observation, — “ that the undue prevalence of self-love is more hurtful to nations and to individuals, than the excesses of passion,” — we need not employ any nice or curious reasonings. For the consequences of a selfish and illiberal *policy*, as exercised in the government of dependent states, have been uniformly felt by every nation, which has tried the experiment. But I shall confine my enquiries to the *private* effects of the principle we are now examining. And among even the *decent* votaries of interest, how few could be found, whose *prudence* would admit of any virtuous exertion? how few, who might not be tempted by the prospect of success, to accomplish their purposes by mean or unworthy methods? — by some sort of artifice, unfairness, or oppression? If *other* gratifications are frequently procured by methods as improper, yet the fondness for them is controuled by the sense of their short continuance, as well as by the checks of reason and conscience. To calculate the exact weight

weight of the different motives to wrong action, would indeed be difficult, but upon the whole, what other motive can, in this respect, be compared with *selfishness*, — pursued, as we have seen, upon principle, sheltered under the semblance of virtue, active and permanent in its nature, constant and uniform in its malignant operation. Now whatever mischiefs may arise from indulged desire, and ungoverned appetite, *these* have their necessary intervals; and, like the inconstant ocean, swell and subside by turns: and as the vessel, which has been fortunate enough to out-ride the storm, though much shattered, may still be refitted: so the person, whom pleasure hath plunged in irregular courses, though shaken, and torn by tempestuous passions, may chance to be restored. In the calm of reflexion, the mind may be impressed with serious sentiments; the heart may be warmed with devout affections; acts of penitence may be seconded by the aids of grace; and the whole character, moulded anew, may assume and preserve a quite different form. But though all who are shipwrecked do not perish, and safety has sometimes been found in a plank; yet never should our happiness be trusted to such contingencies. For vices, though not destructive in the same degree, are all leagued in the work of destruction, and each so connected with the rest, that it would be difficult to determine, which should be most avoided. Yet, as the nature of principles cannot be better determined, than by their known operation and effects, I will just observe, in concluding this article, that

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it was a sordid attachment to the *interest* of their Order, which hindered the greater part of the Jewish rulers from believing on our Saviour, notwithstanding all the miracles, by which he had proved his divine commission; while another part of the same Order, though convinced of his pretensions, were withheld from confessing their belief by a mean, and criminal *timidity* *.

Every kind of evil, whether real, or imaginary, is the object of *fear*. This principle, like that of self-love, is given to us as a guard and security; and like that too, is apt to exceed its bounds. Not to possess it however, would be a defect: not to yield to its warnings on proper occasions, would be rashness or stupidity.

But evils may be *apparent* only; or they may be over-balanced by the good with which they are connected. In all such cases (and there is a great variety of them) instinct may, and ought to, be over-ruled by reflexion and experience, by sage advice, or legitimate authority. If it is not, reason will have lost its controul; the mind will be disturbed by the apprehension of imaginary evils, and its firmness broken by the habit of yielding where it ought to resist.

Pilate's resolution to acquit our Saviour, and the strong reluctance he felt against yielding him up to the malice of the Jews, were at last overcome by their crafty suggestion, that by assuming the title of king, he had declared himself an
enemy

* Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue. John xii. 42.

enemy to Cæsar. Pagan prejudice had not extinguished in the Roman Governor the sense of justice and humanity. He revered the innocence of Jesus, but was intimidated by the wretches he despised: he sacrificed his judgment and inclinations; his conscience, honour and honesty to *unmanly fear*!

When I was a man (says St. Paul) I put away childish things — without doubt, all such puerile fears, as would obstruct him in the discharge of his perilous commission.

In the vast variety of arguments for the truth of our religion, there is hardly any more striking, than the invincible courage of the Apostles and primitive Christians. Infidel writers, not chusing to affront all history by denying them this merit, have taken a more artful method, and endeavoured to shew, that if it is an excellence, they enjoy it in common with bigots and fanatics: for that “error too hath its martyrs.” We will not imitate their unfairness. We admit the fact in its utmost extent, and willingly allow this specious and imposing objection all the weight it can bear. The zeal of persons, acting from a false persuasion may, and often does, produce the highest degrees of courage and resolution, — even the contempt of death, though attended with tortures. And what does this prove? Only what every good man must wish to see proved, — that exalted sentiments are congenial to the human mind, and that man may be sincere in a wrong opinion or attachment, as well as in a right one. For the affection itself may be highly pure and sublimated, though the object of it

be ever so improper or mistaken. Now, if the zeal be alike sincere in both cases, why should it not be alike intrepid? But would such a mutual resemblance in one point, necessarily imply a resemblance in all? Or is a blind, and an intelligent zeal to be placed on the same level, because they have one particular quality in common? It is true, that in comparing actions, which spring from principles, exactly similar in appearance, though differing very widely in their nature, there is room for mistakes: and in cases of this sort, an anxious scruple, or a hasty prejudice would perhaps be excusable. But what excuse can be alleged for those, who, after the maturest reflexion on the subject, endeavour to deceive themselves and the world by lessening the number of true martyrs, or the value of their testimony? Or what advantage do they propose to their cause by detracting from either? The *noble army*, were it much less complete than is commonly imagined, would be more than sufficient for the *service*. On the other hand, no considerate person ever inferred the truth of Christianity from the single circumstance of intrepidity in its first professors, although the whole course of their lives, corresponding to the conclusion of them, was indeed a continued martyrdom. Every thinking person will perceive at once, that effects so extraordinary, so regular, and so permanent, could not be derived from enthusiasm, or from bigotry. Nor is there the least circumstance to countenance such a suspicion. For, when to the force of a full conviction, and animated
faith,

faith, we add the subsidiary aids imparted from above; the conduct of those holy men, how wonderful soever, is alike consistent with their principles, and conformable to their condition; which rendered the voluntary choice of dangers and of sufferings altogether as rational, as a regard to our ease and safety on any common occasion. As they never pretended to a faultless virtue, their integrity is not impeached by some instances of frailty. They themselves frankly record them, and thus, without design, demonstrate their veracity. If in the vast number of Christians then living, or of those, who came after, whether dignified with the title of Martyrs, or Confessors, or Fathers of the Church, some were enthusiasts, and others superstitious, and others insincere — this, so far from affecting the credit of Christianity, is a strong confirmation of its truth. But suppose such marks of degeneracy had *not* been foretold; — suppose, if you please, that the Apostles themselves had proved unworthy of the trust reposed in them; still the truth of the Gospel would have been just the same, whatever might have been the success of it. It was not the intention of Providence to prevent sin by taking away that liberty, which is the foundation of virtue; but to restore our nature by methods consistent with its moral capacities; to raise and ennoble it by an institution worthy of its origin, and adapted to its state. Now, whether we judge of the Gospel from its obvious tendency, or from its actual effects, the value of the institution will equally appear. The empire of idolatry
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and superstition has been quite overthrown, excepting in those parts of the Globe, which are yet strangers to its doctrines, or in which they have been greatly corrupted. The truths revealed, the precepts enjoined, the examples set before us, all tend to our improvement in virtue. And although that improvement has been greater, or less, according to the various accidents, which, in different times and places, have aided, or retarded the effects of instruction; yet it cannot be doubted, but the influence of virtue on the whole has been greatly extended. Let every one, who wishes to extend it still farther, endeavour to imitate the *fidelity* of the first Christians, though he cannot equal their courage. Indeed, the times we live in do not call for such wonderful exertions. If they did, God only knows how far *our* faith would support us! We ought to be thankful, that we are not exposed to the uncertain issue of so awful a decision. Not that the pious distrust of our own strength will hinder us from exerting it, when occasion offers. No. Men of this stamp are ever among the first to signalize their zeal; and when the road to *perfection*, though planted with perils, lies open before them, disdain to be confined within the scanty limits of a vulgar virtue. Such is the *testimony*, which St. Paul exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of; — a testimony, which none but the best of men are *capable* of giving; and which, because these instances of virtue are rare and singular, and because the false pretences to it are equally common, bad men mis-construct and ridicule as extravagant

vagant and enthusiastic. But the fear of reproach in cases of this sort, and the different ways in which it affects men of different tempers, is a consideration, which belongs more properly to my next article. I shall now therefore, in the last place, consider the influence of *false shame*, so far as it regards religion and morals.

A stronger proof of its pernicious influence can hardly be imagined, than the great encouragement and advantage which it gives to *misapplied ridicule*. Were it not for the wrong habit of mind, that accords and conspires with the wrong bent of this lively faculty, the abuses of wit, if not wholly prevented, would be greatly restrained. For if those, who are capable of judging, were rightly inclined, that wanton spirit, which is commonly so cruel in its sport, must be contented with more innocent employment. But the more serious the subject, the more respectable the character, the greater is its triumph in exposing both. So very careless is the world in judging, and so little does the *force of ridicule* depend upon the justness of it! The mischiefs, which this talent has done to society, in consequence of its connexion with the principle we are now considering, are not easily recounted. In those early ages, before the world was enlightened by any clear discovery of the divine will, no one can doubt but the belief of natural religion, with all its defects, was very beneficial. God almighty, though worshipped in ignorance, was still worshipped with
sincerity

sincerity by every grave and considerate person. And the reverence for things sacred, though mixed with superstition, by restraining the unruly passions to which man is subject, was a strong guard, while it lasted, both to public virtue, and to private morals. But it was the employment of the witty and profligate then, as it is now, to remove this guard, by throwing contempt upon religion, and laughing at its sanctions. And the same *false shame*, which induced even good men to pretend the belief of points, which common sense disavows, and to comply with practices, which nature abhors; incited others to side with those, who made a jest of all religion; — setting the notions even of a God and Providence on the same level as the rest of their fables. A sect, which had no settled principles themselves, nor any formed design but that of unsettling the faith of others, was in great request. As they boasted of their freedom from prejudice, and indulged in the most licentious raillery, it was easy for them to gain admirers among the gay and thoughtless by attacking the established belief on its weaker sides. But the great truths on which it was founded; the great importance of public worship to the welfare of society; and a mere respect for the laws of their country, ought to have secured such subjects from scorn and derision.

While *religion* was treated with this indecent freedom, can we wonder if *virtue* and *probity* were insulted in their turn? If the best historians may be credited, the low jests of a great Comic genius

genius contributed more to the condemnation of Socrates, than all the serious charges exhibited against him. The solemn absurdity of those accusations was indeed one of the finest subjects for the exercise of wit. But unprincipled men, rather than employ their talents to any good purpose, will even decline displaying them to the best advantage.

We all know, that a far greater Person than the excellent Athenian, experienced the same contemptuous treatment under the same doleful circumstances. To disgrace his declining cause, scoffs and sneers were employed with as fatal success as directer calumny.

Let me also observe, — for it is much to our present purpose, and extremely memorable in itself, — that the greatest Master of ridicule, the world ever produced, who, with equal judgment and success, had exposed the absurdities of the Pagan system; and, if not a convert to the Christian religion, was at least well acquainted with its excellence; — that this person, if he was not an apostate, as some have contended, became a scornful blasphemer, as we learn from his own writings, — offended at the seeming incongruity of a suffering Saviour, and ashamed of his low-born and unlettered followers. Without the evidence of unquestioned history, who would believe that so determined an opposer of vice and falsehood, could be carried against truth and virtue by the force of some casual impression? — that a philosopher, so celebrated for his learning and good-sense, should at last be the dupe of such vulgar prejudices?

judices? But indeed, from no species of folly or crime is any man secure, who ventures to confide in superior parts; — so easy is the passage from vanity to presumption, from pride to profaneness? Every age has afforded examples of this sort; and the instruction they convey should be deeply imprinted on the minds of all, who are candidates for fame. How dangerous the power of commanding admiration! How dreadful the possession of *unblest* talents!

If we turn our attention to the age we live in, notwithstanding the wonderful improvements in almost every branch of knowledge, and in the art of reasoning itself; what with the want of thought on one hand, and of resolute firmness on the other, the old abuses, which, from the mere mutability of error, ought to have worn out and decayed long since, still continue to be fresh and flourishing. The proper employment of *ridicule* is, to expose those vices and follies, which, though well deserving of punishment, elude the severity of public justice. The proper end of *shame* is, to keep us steady in the paths of honour. But when, instead of examining what is honourable, and what is shameful, we trust to the rash decisions of fancy or opinion; our judgment and our feelings become so perverted, that the *shame* implanted in us by Providence to deter us from base, or criminal pursuits, shall prevent us from the discharge of our duty: and the *ridicule*, which, if guided by truth and justice, might in some sort supply the defect of laws, by punishing secret and successful villainy,

villainy, is pointed against innocence and virtue. Thus, to avoid the reproach of credulity, many have pretended to believe, what is clearly impossible — that there is no first Cause, no Creator, or Governor of the Universe. Others, to avoid the reproach of prejudice, and a slavish attachment to systems and opinions; boldly reject the Christian revelation; refuse to be guided in their belief by any settled articles; or governed in their conduct by any fixed principles. The character of the most polished nation now existing on the globe, is a melancholic proof of this. Among that people many, without doubt, continue to comply with the forms of Popery, though well aware of its scandalous corruptions. But of all those, who do not continue to be mere bigots, how very few are there in whom any serious sense of religion could be found? A spirit of levity, that will bear no reflexion, and brook no restraint, has hurried both them and us into the wildest inconsistencies. For how shall we reconcile this passion for freedom with the patient submission to tyrannical directors, — slaves themselves to modes and opinions, which have no other foundation than in vice, or vanity? To what cause can we impute it, that men of good education, and of sound understanding, should be awed by persons they despise, into courses they detest? — should abstain from the worship of God with as much perseverance, as if their own honour, and the safety of their country were concerned in keeping all thoughts of religion out of the world? — should adopt a system, in which irregular attach-

attachments, or cruel seduction, or treacherous invasions of the marriage bed, are substituted in the room of *chastity*; — in the room of *temperance*, every species of extravagant indulgence; — instead of *prudence* and *justice*, the most ruinous dissipation, and accumulated debts, never meant to be discharged; — instead of *fortitude*, self-destruction for the losses at play; or the destruction of friends for a word mis-spoken or mis-apprehended! Such are the effects of the *shame*, which fashion hath created!

To this *shame*, the *ridicule*, so much in request, is a proper associate. For, by the slightest change of circumstances or mis-stating of facts, it will fix a blot on the brightest characters, burlesque the very nature which God hath given us, and the whole order of things, which he hath established. While some delight in this horrid exercise of their wit and ingenuity; others are proud to be deluded; and by their senseless applause, and servile imitation, give vogue and countenance to such vile impostors.

To conclude. If *ridicule* may possibly be an useful instrument on *some* occasions; yet we all know how very seldom it is placed in discreet hands; how much oftener it is directed against piety, than against the pretences to it; against religion itself, than against its corruptions, — superstition and enthusiasm. *These* indeed according to some modern philosophers, may be substituted for the whole of religion at any period; — and better indeed they would be, than what such persons re-

commend

commend in their room; — perpetual doubt, after God hath been pleased to afford us satisfactory evidence; or determined disbelief, after he hath given us a complete revelation. But whatever may be the creed prescribed by those, who assume the direction, let us not be reasoned, or raillied out of our faith. Whatever may be the cast, or colour of the times, let the course of our conduct be steady and constant, like those eternal truths, by which it is guided. And let the sense of our frailty, while it strengthens our pious resolutions, secure our hearts from presumptuous confidence. In a word, let us beseech God, that we never may be found among the faithless and apostate tribe — the slaves of INTEREST, the victims of COWARDICE, or the martyrs of FALSE SHAME!



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